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NATIONAL DEFENSE IN RELATION TO EXTENSION SERVICE*

By
Fred C. Jans
Field Agent, Organization and Planning Section

We live in an age in which things are presumed to be valuable if popular and wherein publicity and propaganda are treated by many as a science. New words and phrases come along and find their way into our vocabulary whether we like them at first or not. "For Defense," "Total Defense," and a few others in addition to totalitarianism, blitzkrieg, and axis powers are with us. Fifth columns are the special concern of some, and subversive activities may be sabotage or merely not doing what "I want you to do."

Our Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Claude R. Wickard, said in the November 1940, Extension Service Review: "Within the last few months, a new phrase, 'total defense' has found its way into the language of the American people. These words sum up the task we must shoulder if we are not to be victims of the dictators' 'total war.' But I wonder if all of us have given thought to that word 'total' as applied to our defense problem. If we are to have a 'total defense,' each one of us must be ready to play his part, and each one of us must try to understand our defense problem as a whole." Secretary Wickard was writing about the farmer's part in defense. In the same issue appear "Land Use Planning for Defense," "Adjusting To Meet Defense Goal," "Soil Conservation Districts - A Defense Tool," "Tree Defense Against Nature's Blitzkrieg," "Social Defenses," and "The Defense of Freedom."

It would seem that the defense of America and her ideals and institutions is not only of general interest but something which needs attention. If total defense is necessary - and experience has shown that partial defense is costly and unwise - then every segment of the population must give serious consideration.

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Newspapers are full of information of transpiring events dealing mainly with military and industrial considerations. To us in the West and Southwest, this would mean more if we could imagine wave after wave of monstrous bombers sweeping in from the ocean and unloading destructive cargoes on Main Street.

I am not qualified to discuss military defense or the mobilization of our industrial forces. You know as much about it as I. I propose to summarize available information relating to national defense which touches on rural America. An effort no doubt should be made to define defense as it is being used. Let us consider it as the activity which supplements the military forces with all the production pertinent thereto and backed up by an adequate food supply being produced by a proud and stable agricultural population. Whether the efforts of the defense administration will result in decentralizing industry or not, remains to be seen. Agriculture might benefit by being in position to use surplus man labor and still continue to maintain satisfactory rural communities.

What is the farmer's job in defense? What is the relationship to extension effort? Number one in my list of considerations is that rural people make use of available information and study local, State, national, and international problems in which they are or may become involved. This is being done in a large part of the country through discussion groups and informal community meetings. A county agent might profitably engage his people in a series of discussion group meetings to consider the future of American agriculture. He needs only to present the discussion procedure. The community will do the rest. If the county is already organized for planning, its people can proceed without much effort on the part of the agent. The discussion may not result in a conclusion, but an interchange of ideas will prove interesting to those participating and will make future community effort easier. <u>All of us should know what we are defending</u>. Where else is there freedom of speech, religious liberty, universal education, and uncensored information as we have it through the press and radio?

We have heard much about the regimentation of farmers in the AAA programs, but tobacco growers in 1939 decided by vote not to have marketing quotas. The fact that they might vote again, and the same or differently, proves that individual freedom is not gone. The AAA program does exert influence on the signer whereby he reduces production, prevents wind erosion and the like, but his being a signer implies that he exercised a choice on coming in or staying out. This farm program will do more than any other effort to prevent a repetition of the tearing up of sod for food production and disastrous prices for farmers. Some may have grave doubts about the workability of the Ever-Normal Granary, but evidence exists that it has helped farm prices. We have a lot of produce stored away, but prices are not as bad as world prices. The farmer can help in defense by participating in the farm program. Abandonment of the program will certainly not guarantee orderly marketing and better prices.

What else can agriculture do? Serious consideration can be given to improving the health of the farm family and making adequate medical and hospital facilities available to more farm families. Planning activities can study the local situation and discuss ways and means of working on the problems which are recognized. 4-H Club work has done and is doing much to improve the health situation in rural areas, but that is not nearly enough. Adults, too, should participate in efforts to improve health among farm people. The 1940 Outlook for farm family living states that there is one practicing physician for every 800 persons generally in this country but that in some of the typically farm counties it may run as high as one physician to 3,000. It is suggested that average family medical care should cost about $100 per year, but the average is about $50 in the middle income families on farms. Many of course spend much less. The Farm Security Administration has done an excellent job in many areas with group medical care. This is a job which planning committees can study profitably. Many planning committees are setting in motion community examinations of school children, and some have followed this up with clinics for handling dental and minor medical operations. Miss Harriet Elliott, Consumer Commissioner of the National Defense Advisory Commission, says, "Defense is building the health, the physical fitness, the social well-being of all our people,and doing it the democratic way."

In a recent issue of Farm Income published by BAE, it was stated that the last year's income for the 11 Western States was up with one or two States showing very good gains but with one showing considerable loss. This is not a matter for injured State pride but a serious challenge to extension workers to help the people find out why and to supply local folks information which will offer the greatest possible chance for improving the situation. Total defense is certainly concerned with farm income. The safety of democracy lies in the absence of large numbers in destitution. Discussion groups in many places are examining the prospects for increased prices due to war demand and purchases for defense, but generally it is agreed that prices on most agricultural items will not rise materially. An increase of 6 or 7 percent is suggested for the total farm cash income. We had a 5 percent rise over 1939. Producers of commodities which are not overproduced and which have for some time supplied only the domestic market will naturally be in a favorable position. If one is pessimistic enough he can foresee the prices paid by farmers for manufactured items going up at a rapid rate and prices received for products he produces gaining only a little. I lean a little that way myself as I feel that labor has been given a favored position at the price table. Labor can stop production of industrial products and with relief offices ready to supply food can wait for a higher wage, which many times is just. The farmer can hardly adjust his total production and if he should shut down, he waits a whole year for another chance. I am encouraged greatly by evidence that Government orders will not be shoveled out to business at any price plus a profit, but I believe industry will retain more of the new money to be spent than the farmer.

Farm families and the rest of us, too, will spend more for food this coming year. Clothing will be somewhat higher and other supplies which have had much labor applied will cost more. We are in a position to help the farm family make its dollar go farther. Attention to the items of which there is a large surplus and inclusion of these items at the expense of others (within limits of safety, of course) will make the budget work a bit better. Luxury items will no doubt carry a heavy tax burden. Farm-produced food and other contributions from the farm for the family's living have a definite bearing on gross income and the financial safety of the family. There is work to do in assisting the farm people to increase incomes.

In the recent Outlook Conference held in Washington, Dr. Hazel Stiebeling of the Bureau of Home Economics made the statement that fewer than half of our farm families have good diets. She made the statement also that farm families could increase consumption by the following amounts:

500 million gallons of milk
200 million dozen eggs
100 million pounds of butter
1 billion pounds of vegetables rich in vitamin C
400 million pounds of meat and poultry

What would this added consumption do for surpluses and prices? One-fourth of the people of the United States are farm people. They have 10 percent of the national income, have one-third of the children, and produce one-half of the increase in population. Extension has been criticized for not showing greater progress in the production of adequate food on farms. Due to its relation to defense, this job should not be given too small a role in our work.

If general production is stepped up and the war situation changes to one of peace, the farm family which has a safety in its own way of living will weather the storm.

Much defense information can be dispensed through 4-H Clubs and country schools. The part young people will play is essentially citizenship training. Some of the States have a well-organized series of 4-H meetings on citizenship and defense. Information of this nature is available from the Washington office of the Extension Service. Vocational guidance is well-adapted to club work, and vocational training of rural young people has long been needed. Many of our young people merely drift to town rather than going to a job for which they are specially trained.

In a narrow sense, recreation seems to have little to do with national defense. If recreation is opportunity for farm families to discover talent and relax in wholesome fashion, then recreation must be studied from the point of view of the whole community. Groups which play

together will work together. We have paid a very high price in America for our commercialized entertainment and our substitutes for homely pastimes and abandonment of our church influence.

If I have interpreted correctly the opinions which I reviewed in preparation of the above, I believe Extension has a very clear responsibility in the development of national defense. We are anxious to save our democracy and the way of life it represents. We must do much more. We must be able to inspire others, and especially the young people of rural areas, with the principles of democracy and how to make it more secure. To date we are not fighting a visible enemy. The struggle is to mobilize sound ideas to make sure that we can, if need be, meet any enemy of our democracy in a way that France did not do. The struggle ahead " is not a candle" to that which faces us after the European war is over. We will then be faced with a choice of production for this country's consumption alone, or, entering a vicious and bitter competition for a few foreign orders.

The extension agent, it seems to me, has the job of organizing his people. He must be better informed than they on incomes and chances for improvement. He must make available information and devices which they can use to formulate sound judgments for the future of local agriculture and from which contributions will come toward national agricultural policies.

The specialist can provide agents with much valuable information which he in turn can hand on to his people. The specialist can use his influence for the betterment of income, health, and social conditions. He may be able to cooperate with others to meet problems which are only partly in his field.

We are a part of the Department of Agriculture and as such are a part of the scheme for national defense. It is not ours to choose whether we shall give our rural people defense information and the best we have of democracy, but we must do this and stand nearby to help carry the load. You and I may not fully appreciate the shock of having to make violent adjustments in our whole business and family living. Many thousands of farmers are doing that at this moment and many more will be forced to do so in the near future, I believe.

I began by indicating the universal attempts to apply defense to everything we are engaged in, and will close by saying that if you do everything you can to make your local people more secure in their homes and on their farms and members of a more wholesome community, you will be doing your share in national defense.